

VZCZCXR07464
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #3294/01 3280453

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 240453Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2207
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0120
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 013294

SIPDIS

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AIDAC
SENSITIVE

Dept for EAP/MTS
NSC for Holly Morrow

From American Consulate Medan # 32, 2006

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AS](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: TNI Commander Reaffirms Military's Commitment to
Helsinki MOU

¶11. (SBU) Summary: In a speech in Aceh on November 6, TNI Commander Air Marshal Djoko Suyanto said TNI would continue to respect the Helsinki MOU after the departure of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) next month. He also reminded his audience that TNI had withdrawn from politics, acted under the direction of the province's civilian authorities, and could play an important role in Aceh's reconstruction and development. Responding to blunt questions from the audience, Suyanto said that TNI does not insist that GAM disband and cited the fact that the military no longer engaged in kidnapping as proof that the TNI had genuinely reformed. Although other military officials have admitted that "excesses" were committed in Aceh, this appears to be the first specific admission that TNI had engaged in kidnapping. End Summary.

¶12. (U) On November 6, TNI Commander Air Marshal Djoko Suyanto spoke in Aceh to a large audience of government officials, GAM representatives, ulamas, and civil society representatives. The purpose of the speech was to reassure the Acehenese that TNI remained committed to the Helsinki MOU and that it would continue to respect it after the departure of the European Union led Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) next month.

¶13. (U) In his speech, Suyanto told his audience that despite the significant progress made since the signing of the Helsinki MOU in August 2005, distrust and fear of the military remains widespread; all parties in attendance, including GAM, TNI, and civil society, he said, should work together to overcome these fears and suspicions. TNI has lived up to its commitments in the MOU and the Acehenese should not be afraid, he continued, because TNI has fully withdrawn from politics and is now under the control of civilian authorities. Emphasizing this point, he repeated several times throughout his speech that the KODAM no longer has independent authority and can only act with the consent of officials in Jakarta and Aceh. Fears that TNI will abandon its commitment to the MOU or to Peace, even after AMM's mission has concluded, he said, are completely unfounded.

¶14. (U) Discussing the role of the military in Aceh, Suyanto expressed his belief that the military TNI might one day

play an important role in Aceh's reconstruction and development. Citing the case of Irian Jaya, Suyanto said that TNI could be an engine for development of critical infrastructure like roads and bridges. He also denied allegations that the military is constructing new bases in Aceh and explained that the new facilities are intended to replace those destroyed in the 2004 Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami. Anyone who knows about the TNI budget, he said, knows that we don't have the funds to be expanding in Aceh. People who worry about the role of TNI in Aceh should remember, he said, TNI is not spreading in the province and it is not acting alone, it is working under control of the civilian authorities and the direction of the governor.

¶15. (U) Commenting on the election, Suyanto warned that there will inevitably be parties who are disappointed by the outcome. Those groups should act with self control and restraint or risk promoting anarchy.

¶16. (U) A rough transcript of Suyanto's remarks and photos of the event can be accessed on OSIS (unclassified) at http://transition.intelink.gov/state/sumatra/2006/11/panglim_a_speaks_to_aceh.html.

¶17. (U) During the question and answer period, Suyanto faced blunt questions from a skeptical audience. Almost all the questions came from ulamas and local officials; no GAM representative asked any questions or made any comments. In responding to the questions, Suyanto told the audience that the military did not insist that GAM disband - GAM, the acronym for Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (the Free Aceh Movement) could just as easily stand for Gerakan Aceh Maju (Movement for Progress in Aceh) or Gerakan Aceh Membangun (Aceh Development Movement), he said.

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¶18. (SBU) Suyanto also pointed to the fact that he has personally signed orders punishing 30 soldiers in the seven months he has been military commander and the fact that TNI was no longer engaged in kidnapping as proof that TNI has genuinely reformed and is committed to peace in Aceh.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: although other senior TNI officials have acknowledged that excesses were committed in Aceh, this appears to be the first time kidnapping has been specifically mentioned.

Pascoe